1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6



special request for a certain animal before the active hunters rode into the slaughter.

Objects of material culture were personally owned; but the test of ownership was not production so much as use. Clothing was prepared and made by the women, but owned by the person who wore it. A robe made by a woman for herself was hers, while a robe made for her son or husband belonged to that worthy. Tools and utensils used by the women belonged to the women and were also made by them. Every warrior carried his own kit of tools for the making of bows and arrows. This kit was an indispensable part of his personal equipment and was always carried fastened to his body, so that no matter what the emergency he was prepared to equip himself with weapons. Some older men specialized in arrow-making. They gave arrows to petitioners with or without consideration. Each man marked his own arrows with distinctive feathers or by some characteristic of production. Women made saddles for themselves and held them as their own property. The man's saddle, which was of a slightly different style, was owned by the men. Among the Comanches they were made by Mexican captives who specialized in the trade for pay.

Medicine paraphernalia were made by the owner according to his vision directions. If the help of others was needed, they received no pay other than food. The medicine formula was privately owned, but could be transferred in consideration of payment, or given as gift, or inherited. The power itself, however, had to come through a dream as a confirmation of the efficacy of the transfer. War honors were another very distinct form of incorporeal property. These could be transferred as a gift of high esteem, as has been described. They were not, however, articles of trade in economic exchange.

The tipi, which was made, erected and moved by the woman, was not hers by proprietary right. The decision as to its disposal belonged to the husband, though if generous and well-disposed towards her, he frequently gave it to the wife on separation.

Throughout the simple catalogue of goods we find that articles of personal use were usually personally owned according to the principle of effective utilization.

## INHERITANCE

In the disposal of a deceased's property there is but one rule which stood out with constancy: *upon the death of a person all effects of his (or her) personal usage were destroyed.* This included clothing, weapons, saddles, tools, paraphernalia, and horses customarily ridden by the deceased. According to Neighbors, "They also killed their favorite wives, but this custom has

## The Comanches

567 [422] of trade, and poverty-stricken Shoshones often sold their children to their more prosperous Comanche cognates.

641 [727] Some captives became naturalized, free members of the tribe, even respected warriors. The changed status was recognized by a solemn ceremony only after the Comanches felt they ran no risk by such a step. According to the customary procedure, the pipe was passed around the council circle. After smoking, all stood up, each placing his right hand over the heart, then raising it toward the sun, repeating the process while marching around the circle. Then the captive was led before the chief to take the oath, wherein he promised faithfully to perform all the duties of a Comanche warrior, to help provide for, protect, and obey the chief in all things in both peace and war. The person taking the oath was then given a Comanche name and was required to select a family and be adopted by a brother.

422 ● 424 Objects of material culture were personally owned, but the test of ownership was not production so much as use. Clothing was made, for example, by the women, but was owned by the person who wore it. The medicine formula was privately owned, but could be transferred. War honors were a sort of property which might on occasion be transferred, but rather as a mark of esteem and not for economic consideration. Objects jointly used, like the tipi, were usually considered to be the property of the husband.

428 At the time the Comanches were confined upon the reservation, their practices in regard to inheritance were in a chaotic condition. Apparently the whole problem of inheritance was so new to their culture that no established norms had evolved. The Plateau tribes from whom the Comanches had separated themselves when they entered the plains were accustomed to destroy all a man's property at his death. This included clothing, weapons, saddles, tools, war paraphernalia, and horses customarily ridden by the deceased, and in ancient times even the wife. In the early days, the Comanches also sometimes killed the favorite wives of a deceased warrior. Articles of intimate personal use were buried with the corpse; other less important articles were burned. This destruction entailed few hardships and no serious economic loss, since the property was limited to clothing and a few weapons and utensils. When the Comanches acquired horses, inheritance became a serious problem. To slaughter the entire

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6



554 424 A coup was regarded as a type of incorporeal property, which could be transferred by the owner to a comrade in public ceremony. The practice may have emerged only since the advent of the reservation, when the restrictions upon fighting imposed by the whites made the coup a commodity of scarcity, so that the ingenious Comanches devised the transfer technique. It was done in public in order that the recipient's right to the honor would be witnessed and duly recognized. It was considered best if the giver of the honors announced a dance, inviting all members of the band to be present. After the dance had continued for a time, the host, walking to the center of the ring, called a halt. There, in the presence of all the people, he narrated the details of a coup, swearing to the powers that the deed was his, and concluded by saying, "I now give this to my brother, ———." The man named then stood and claimed the deed, with the following words, "I now take this deed. Sun, Father, Moon above, and Earth, Mother, witness that it is mine." The drum was struck a resounding blow. If those present gave their assent, the transfer of the coup was complete. The coup was bestowed only upon brave men; it could be neither sold nor inherited.[5]

721 The prosecution of warfare was a matter of individual discretion. Any Comanche was theoretically eligible to lead a war or raiding party, for there was no legal authority to restrain him. Although a vision was not deemed necessary as a sanction for starting a war party, it was in many cases the effective stimulus. Should a man inexperienced in warfare and without an established reputation attempt to organize and lead a party, he would be unlikely to secure a following. A young warrior was usually content to serve under others until he had gained experience. He must know when and how to attack and how to retreat without loss of men when the fighting went against him. On the other hand, a man whose qualities of bravery and leadership had been demonstrated in combat seldom found any difficulty in mustering a following when he announced his intention to go on the warpath. Nobody would risk leading a party without power. He may have received it through a vision or a dream. When a man declared that he knew how, he certainly felt that he did, else he would be afraid to say so. It was for each individual to determine for himself whether his own and the leader's power was working for success.